

Working Parents' Resources for Challenging Times



During this unprecedented time of uncertainty and stress with the COVID-19 Pandemic, parents are feeling the burden more than ever. While we have always struggled to balance work, parenting, and personal time ... now many of us are expected to also become our children's teachers as schools are closed, and/or their caregiver while daycares/preschools are closed. Caring for and loving our children is not a burden but balancing that with ongoing work responsibilities can be increasingly difficult.

I am sharing these strategies and tips with you in hopes that they resonate and help to bring you a sense of calm and confident management of the situation. They are aligned with the 5 core principles which I personally follow and teach for intentional success.

Voice: *The voices we hear in the media are often hysteric-driven and meant to grab our attention. We must find our internal voice of reason and calm to demonstrate for our children how to get through difficult times.*

- **Be a voice of reason** in a room of panic. Stop yourself from getting on board with those who are spinning out of control.
 - When parents talk about “school may not go back for the remainder of the year!” ... take a breath, acknowledge that it could happen, and remind yourself/others that **we shouldn't stress over “what could be”**.
- **Speak up for what you truly NEED** to make it through this time. Talk with managers/employees to set clear expectations. We are all in this boat together, and it only goes forward if we row as a team.

Confidence: *If we let our minds go to the place of insecurity, we will no doubt be paralyzed with “what-ifs”. Now is the time to be certain in your values, priorities, and your essentials.*

- **Mindset is the key to confidence.** Practice affirmations that are bolstering to your personal confidence as a parent/employee/citizen.
- Shift your mindset to **be grateful for this bonus time with your children.** They grow so quickly, and this snapshot in time will forever be locked inside your brain. Yes, it's hard, but it is still a gift.

Fear: Fear of the unknown is intrinsic for human nature, but so is the instinct for curiosity. Allow yourself to read and stay abreast of the situation but take note of the feeling in your gut when you are researching the COVID-19 updates. Does it make you tense, anxious, or fearful? Our brains believe what they are constantly told. If we bombard them with negative news, we will certainly become fearful.

- **Use your research in a scientific manner** to adjust what precautions you need to take. Otherwise, let the constant checking of news and social media pass you by.
- **Gratefulness is a wonderful tool to overcome fear.** Make a list of what gifts/blessings you currently DO have. Begin to flood your mind with the things that ARE working well in your life.
- **Philanthropy is another wonderful tool to subside fear.** What can you do for others who are less fortunate right now? It can be large or small, every act of kindness counts.
 - For example: this week my family rescued an injured Dove and took it to wildlife rehab, we are collecting food for families in need at our school, and we will buy our dinner from a food-truck tonight to consciously support small businesses.

Grace & Space: *Now more than ever this cornerstone is essential!*

Grace: *Be willing to extend this to yourself, and those around you. We are all "having a bad day" right now.*

Space: *Clearly the guidelines encourage social distancing. Be mindful of where and how you interact with others and make smart choices for your children.*

- **Perfect Parenting:** Now is not the time to be a perfect parent. Be clear with what truly matters to your family and make that happen. Otherwise, give yourself the **Grace** to flex your rules as needed for the time being.
- **Independence:** Giving children of all ages the **Space** to explore safely is vitally important. Can you pay your children to do extra chores that you are strapped to get done? Can the baby play for 30minutes in the playpen while you type up a report? Can your little one sit in a high-chair and make a mess of her food as she explores what she likes/dislikes, giving you time to do dishes?
- **Nature:** Be outdoors (safely) as much as possible to feel the power of Natural Space.
 - Fresh air is healthy, and doubles with a calming affect for your soul.
 - Take daily walks with your children in tow. Simple exercise will boost your immune system.
 - Work from your porch whenever possible, maybe while watching the children play in the back yard, or the little ones play in their pack-n-play which you set outside. I used to have my babies nap on the porch in their porta-crib during nice weather.

Parenthood: *Now is the time to weave SIMPLICITY into your parenting approach. Trying times call for adjusted approaches. As parents we learn early on how to multi-task, we are now needing to take that up a notch, i.e.. Take a walk with your children (exercise) and discuss the trees budding (science) while they search for signs of new flowers/plants (exploring).*

- **Meals:**
 - **Keep it simple.** Crock pot meals, Frozen meals, Grub Hub, Cereal, etc. Whatever it takes to feed your family in a reasonably healthy manner and not cut into the challenged time schedule you are currently maintaining.
- **Expectations:**
 - Set your expectations for your children's learning/schedule/etc. right now. Then cut that list by 2/3. This is not a joke! We put more pressure on our selves than is necessary. **Now is the time to do what is essential for your family.** You will return to your buttoned-up ways once this national crisis passes.
- **Screen Time:**
 - I am a firm believer in strict screen time limit for children! However, we have eased our regulations so that we can figure out how to teach, parent, and work from home all in the same day. I am **giving myself a pass** on this one, knowing a month of reduced regulations won't ruin them for life.
- **Learning Time:**
 - If you have **school aged children** be certain to **involve them in a family meeting** to determine how and when you will attack schoolwork. Let them know this is hard on everyone, including the children! The more active they are in planning their day, the more buy-in you will get.
- **Play Time:**
 - Now more than ever this is important! And good news, **play time often doubles as learning time.** Puzzles, coloring, science experiments, baking, bubbles, and so many more options are fun, entertaining, and productive for **school-aged children.** For the **babies** this is a wonderful time to watch them explore their universe, and to encourage pretend play for **toddlers.** Without the structure of school /daycare, our children are free to **explore the concept of self-entertainment** ... an often forgotten but very essential life skill!

I hope that a few of these resonate with you! Parenthood is a gift, the hardest job in the world, and one well worth figuring out. Together, we will get through these altered times while the COVID-19 situation is addressed. Best wishes for good health,

~Stacy

About the author:

Stacy Wood brings a wealth of leadership, training, and sales experience into her boutique coaching practice from years as a successful medical sales consultant, time as an adjunct professor with the University of Richmond, as well as having been a training manager for a Fortune 50 Pharmaceutical firm. Her degree in Animal and Equine Sciences has led her to develop unique equine assisted coaching programs, utilizing her ‘Equine Factor’ design.

The focus of ‘Through the Woods Consulting’ is to help professionals create intentional success in their lives through impactful communications and focused women’s leadership development. Stacy relies on science, nature, powerful communication skills, and personal awareness to guide her clients along the journey of clarity and intentional success.

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